

# Persecuting witches in the Early Modern and Late Modern eras: Similarities and differences of the Sabbath myth<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss the witch-hunt dynamics that emerged at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the US and Great Britain. The discussion will involve analysis of historical repeatability of the Sabbath myth that has triggered witch-hunt persecutions during periods of social dislocations (La Fontaine 1992; 1994; 1998; Philips-Stevens 1991; Heninngsen 1996; Frankfurter 1994; 2006). This paper draws attention to the fact that the persecutory dynamics of the 16<sup>th</sup> century witch craze and the 20<sup>th</sup> century Satanic panic were conditioned by a different ordering principle of the socio-political structure (the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference) that determined the emergence of distinct “anti-Satanist power knowledge” produced by institutions fighting the perceived occult menace (e.g. the Catholic and Protestant clergy in early modern Europe and the “psychotherapeutic industry” in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century America) (Trevor-Roper 1990; Victor 1993). Following the diagnosis of Becker (1963), claiming that the emergence of a social problem is always linked to its proponents, this paper also considers the profile of the advocates of the Satanic ritual abuse (SRA) and examines how the ritual abuse problem that has been articulated by particular interest groups turned into a universal ideology, and what the mechanism for its formation and stabilisation was. To achieve this goal, I will follow a post-Gramscian perspective of hegemony (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Laclau 1996; 2005) and will develop insights initially signalled elsewhere (Smoczynski 2010), showing how the hegemonic practices undertaken by particular SRA proponents were transformed into effective social control measures, which in a number of cases led to persecutions of individuals labelled as “witches” or “Satanists”.

**KEYWORDS:** Sabbath myth, witch-hunt persecutions, Satanic panic, Satanic ritual abuse, ideology, hegemony

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## **Theoretical Perspective**

This paper uses the Essex School social theory mainly elaborated by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) as its principal interpretative framework. The proposed theoretical perspective accentuates the specificity of normative pluralism of functionally differentiated societies, which renders them radically different from the pre-modern mechanistic social bounds that were built on the same concept of substantive common good. This theory was heavily informed by the “linguistic turn” in contemporary humanities, expressed mainly by the writings of de Saussure’s structuralism, analytic philosophy of late Wittgenstein, Derridian post-structuralism and linguistic psychoanalysis as elaborated by Lacan and his followers. Particularly Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1955) idea that the field of language consists of negative differences, and the meaning of the word is not determined by its inherent content but by the external system of differences is of crucial importance for the proposed approach, since Laclau and Mouffe assume that the differential nature of language also applies to any field of significance, including the social field, ‘insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence’ (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 107). Thus, the anti-Satanist formation (SRA proponents) whose claims-making triggered the late 20<sup>th</sup> century witch-hunt was deprived of the ultimate literality; according to Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 98) it is impossible to reduce any social formation to the moments of its ‘necessary immanence’, because ‘there are not two planes, one of essences and the other of appearances, since there is no possibility of fixing an ultimate literal sense for which the symbolic would be a second and derived plane of signification.’ Hence, from this perspective, any social movement, including the analysed SRA proponents, has to employ a hegemonic logic in order to constitute a “contingent ground”, that is, a source of legitimacy for its particular strategy, in the analysed case – a persecution of the alleged Satanists. In this sense, a witch hunt that has been carried out within the social field made up of the equal differences represented the exact political logic of hegemony in which a particular social position (e.g. anti-Satanist group) strove to exceed its particular position and assume universal social meaning resonating with the public. This transformation, which involves the effective usage of mythic structures (a revised ancient Sabbath myth), explains how a social group manages to organise a broader social coalition of differently situated subjects willing to exercise a social control over a particular social issue (e.g. a crackdown on an alleged Satanic menace). The mythic structure that has been employed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century witch hunt resonated with the traditional Sabbath theme, which contributed to transformation of contingent particular social idiosyncrasies into universal discursive structures that became the surface of inscription for differently positioned social subjects (feminist movements, social services, child-savers’ movements, etc.), concerned about the perceived Satanic menace.

In line with the above-described Essex School stance, this paper argues that the sudden emergence and demise of the late modern witch-hunt persecutions were determined by the “open nature” of the post-foundational society. The fragile nature of Satanic panic is especially visible when compared with the witch craze that occurred in the feudal societies of 16<sup>th</sup> century in which hegemonic forms of articulations were minimal, and the

persecution of witches was carried out in a ‘narrowed social space’ with a fixed structure of subject positions governed by a simple rule of repetition (see Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 138). The juxtaposition of both types of witch hunts, which will be consequently analysed in greater detail, is meant to reveal the crucial role of the specific anti-Satanist knowledge understood as the political potential of transformation of relational identities that pre-determines the possible scale of persecutions exercised by the state apparatuses and the ability of fighting back of individuals targeted as “folk devils”.

## **20<sup>th</sup> century witch hunt**

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, allegations about the Satanic organised crime penetrating society hit the public in the US and subsequently in various parts of the world (e.g. Great Britain, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand) (Victor 1998; Lippert 1990; Richardson 1997; Rossen 1989; Pyck 1994; Dyrendal 1998; Guilliat 1996). Descriptions of Satanic practices as exposed in these allegations (mostly occurring in mass media as well as in the confessions of people presenting themselves as “survivors” of ritual crime) included acts of murder, cannibalism, mutilation of infants and children, etc. Alongside the alarm of ritual child abuse cases, allegations were also revealed by adults who allegedly experienced such atrocities in childhood and later suppressed these memories (see Ofshe 1992). As a consequence of these rumours, in the United States from 1983 to 1990, more than one hundred day-care centres were subject to police investigations (Nathan & Snedeker 1995), and nearly two hundred day-care centre workers were arrested and put on trial on charges of ritual child abuse (de Young 2004). Despite the lack of tangible evidence to support these allegations, more than fifty employees were sentenced to many years of prison (De Young 2004; Charlier & Downing 1988). For example, Michelle Noble, an East Valley YMCA day-care centre worker from El Paso, Texas, was sentenced to life plus 311 years imprisonment for child abuse (Nathan 1991: 144); on similar charges Robert Kelly from Little Rascals day-care centre in Edenton, North Carolina, was sentenced to twelve consecutive life sentences (Nathan & Snedeker 1995: 3). These two cases represented the harshest verdicts of the courts in the series of ritual abuse lawsuits. Other court rulings, however, were hardly milder, e.g. Frank Fuster from Country Walk day-care centre in Miami, Florida received six consecutive life sentences (De Young 2004: 152); Gayle Dove received three consecutive life sentences and sixty years imprisonment (ibid.); Martha Felix of Felix’s day-care centre received three consecutive life sentences; Francisco Ontiveros of the same centre received a life sentence (Nathan & Snedeker 1995: 208). In all these criminal cases, the defendants were accused of child abuse, manufacturing and distributing of child pornography, terrorising and abducting children; ritual motives were also present in all these charges (de Young 2004). Some of these trials turned out to be among the longest and most expensive legal processes in American history (e.g. the trials of the McMartin Day Care Center from Manhattan Beach, California cost than fifteen million dollars) (De Young 2004). In all these cases, the prosecutors failed to present substantive material evidence to corroborate the ritual abuse allegations; they were only

able to present the testimonies of ritually abused children (and sometimes their parents, who spoke for the minor victims considered too traumatised to testify), and the opinions of experts (usually sexual abuse specialists, child savers and psychotherapists) (De Young 2004: 38). Children testifying in the courtrooms evoked gruesome memories of sadistic sexual practices, trips to cemeteries and caves, etc. (De Young 2004; Jenkins 1993).

Despite the claims making of “ritual abuse survivors” (this term was commonly used as a self-presenting description of individuals who were allegedly abducted and terrorised by Satanists and managed to escape at some point from the captivity of occult organised criminals) about the existence of a vast murderous Satanic cult organisation, the police failed to find even the smallest traces of their organisational activities: written and electronic correspondence, telephone billings, bank accounts, buildings and premises in which the criminal practices were allegedly taking place, ritual tools and clothing, crematoria, pornographic films, photographic equipment, etc. (Lanning 1992; Hicks 1990; La Fontaine 1998). As La Fontaine (1998) observed, an apocalyptic vision of a criminal organisation, whose activities exceeds any known historical criminal structures (including the most powerful forms of organised criminal groups) and does not leave the slightest trace of a crime, does not withstand contemporary criminological knowledge. Mass genocide, even if done covertly, could not have gone unnoticed (according to ritual abuse claims makers Satanists only in the US murdered 150,000 children annually) (Hicks 1990). Murderous rituals were according to “survivors” – often carried out before the eyes of many members of the sect (see Smith & Pazder 1980), but not once did the “survivors” manage to provide concrete data on, for example, places and names of participants of bloody rituals, which would have allowed the police to obtain unequivocal evidence of the offense (Lanning 1992; Medway 2001).

## **Anti-Satanic multi-subject formation**

Unlike the well-known example of the construction of social problem of consumption and distribution of drugs in the US in the 1950s, in which the crucial role was attributed to one individual moral entrepreneur, i.e. the head of the Department of Treasury’s Federal Bureau of Narcotics, H. J. Anslinger (Becker 1963: 145), the ritual abuse social problem represents different logic with which it is impossible to delimit a single agency that triggered the emergence of this social problem. Anti-Satanists’ articulations have been located in multi-positioned institutional settings (the mass media, interest groups, politicians, church officials, cult survivors’ organisations), which affected the way public identified the enemies of the cherished normative system. These articulations have led to the emergence of a heterogenic anti-Satanist formation composed from a variety of social subjects, both secular and religious. Anti-Satanist discourse was triggered and disseminated during the conferences and seminars organised by psychotherapeutic organisations, religious communities and social services; anti-Satanist experts formulated this problem in the anti-cult movements magazines, also “children savers” organisations actively disseminated the “SRA knowledge” (Victor 1993). This discourse was structured in the form of normative statements of public officers (e.g. the police, prosecutors,

social workers), but also in the form of emotional testimonies of the alleged victims (see Kahaner 1988; Driscoll & Wright 1991). Numerous professionals were involved in dealing with this problem as (e.g. the research of Bottoms et al. (1996)) conducted among clinical psychologists; members of the American Psychological Association revealed that hundreds of psychologists admitted that they had come across a number of SRA cases.

Insofar as SRA lost its initial narrow anti-cult movement meaning, this narrative transcended into a social control discourse and, consequently, has been recognised as an important criminal problem in the broader public. This transformation was facilitated particularly by the intensive involvement of therapeutic industry, which rearticulated the idiosyncrasy of Protestant fundamentalists into specialist medical discourse (see Hill & Goodwin 1993; Gould & Cozolino 1992). According to de Young (2004), medical terminology that offered the interpretative framework of SRA – apart from anti-cult movements' expert knowledge, which as the American Cult Awareness Network or American Family Foundation in the 1980s, created special departments dealing with the occult crime – constituted one of the pillars of the professional-corporate movement of anti-Satanist formation, especially in the US (see also Victor 1993). It is also important to mention the other institutional pillar, i.e. children savers' organisations, whose activists represented a visible interest group in anti-Satanist formation (De Young 2004). Their significance in the US was partly conditioned – as Bromley (1991: 67) observed – by the macrostructural context of American society: weakened parental control, increased divorce rates, and growing influence of peer communities. The horrifying images of Satanic ritual abuse metaphorically accumulated other problems that children savers' movements have struggled with, and Satanic criminals were promptly considered as another deviant group that has been attacking innocent children (Bromley 1991: 66–9).

In addition to professional expertise, we should also mention the powerful symbolic ingredients of the anti-Satanist discourse that should be linked with the Sabbath myth (La Fontaine 1998; Frankfurter 2006). Performative power of the myth of the subversive community undermining the social and moral order was based on its resonance with previous historical articulations, which partly explains its effectiveness as social control discourse. Laclau (1977: 167) observed that the hegemonic discourses must be related to the organic bound with traces of traditional patterns of identification, which represent the irreducible residuum of historical experience; SRA thus re-defined the traditional Sabbath myth, reinforcing the strength of its persuasiveness by the performative acts of repetition and citation in a new social context.

This stage of development of the ritual abuse social problem underpinned by the complex platform of professional institutions represented the hegemonic phase, in which the anti-Satanist discourse was capable of labelling social subjects as criminal deviants and exercising social control. Hegemony understood in the Laclauian perspective as the capability of transforming a particular social problem into universal social problem was manifested with particular clarity in the practice of criminalisation of the occult deviance, and as a result, social services were taking children into custody from parents accused of belonging to the Satanic underworld, and individuals suspected of involvement in

Satanic gangster groups were arrested, sentenced and imprisoned (Jenkins 1992: 182–7; De Young 2004: 59). Naturally, the application of the anti-Satanist hegemonic ideology in late modern, pluralist Anglo-Saxon societies has not captured the entire societies but merely selected segments. Contrary to early modern European witch hunts (which will be discussed in more detail further on), the late modern anti-Satanist articulations were acting as social control strategies that were capable only of a partly hegemonised public square. Articulations of anti-Satanist formation represented in this sense, hybrid articulations, characteristic of the political polity, in which the centres of power are scattered among various institutional centres.

Following the Laclauian perspective (Laclau 1996: 43; Griggs & Howarth 2000), we should point to three historical conditions of possibility that are necessary for a late modern hegemonic formation to emerge: the availability of potential signifiers, their relevance as a means of identifying subjective positions (e.g. “Satanic deviants”), and the strategic position of social agents that are introducing the hegemonic ideology into the public sphere. Bearing in mind that the hegemonic strategy assumes the dynamics of re-articulation of the existing ontic substance (particularly effective narrative structures, i.e. relevant myths that are resonating with the public etc.) and regrouping them into new frameworks of persuasiveness (see Laclau 2000: 79-82), an analysis of the anti-Satanist formation must be placed against the socio-cultural background of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Saxon societies. When we search for the family resemblance of the anti-Satanist narrative in the broader set of social anxieties, it can be detected that the updated Sabbath myth was intertwined with the concerns regarding the moral permissiveness and the crisis of “family values” that affected significant segments of Anglo-Saxon societies. The ritual abuse problem lost its particular anti-cult connotations precisely within this extended field of social anxiety (see Nathan & Snedeker 1995: 35; Diamond 1989; Durham 1991; Smith 1994). The hegemonic practice of anti-Satanist formation consisted of incorporating “anxiety themes”, particularly concerning children, into the main body of its argument underpinned by the significant portion of therapeutic and anti-cult discourse (see Smoczynski 2010).

## **Moral panic and social crisis**

A significant number of academic publications analysing the phenomenon of SRA should be located in the current of sociological theory that accentuates the functional role of deviance determining the normative boundaries of the community (see Victor 1998; La Fontaine 1998; Bromley 1991; 1992; Hill & Barnett 1994; Jenkins & Maier-Katkin, 1992), particularly, the most compelling texts were brought by De Young (2004) and Victor (1998) explaining SRA as the events of moral panic. In contrast, Bromley (1991) argued that SRA should be inscribed in the logic of actions initiated by the anti-cult movements of the 1970s, which were subsequently supplemented with the new symbolic elements of the 1980s American social unrest. Ellis (2000; 2003), in turn, pointed to the historical continuity of SRA founded on the “informal channels” of Gothic stories and urban legends circulating especially in the fundamentalist circles. Nathan (1991a) and

Victor (1993) pointed to the conditions of the politico-economic life of early 1980s in America when the myth of the Satanic underground was being born, and Americans had to face the economic crisis, dislocation of traditional values (e.g. increasing divorce rates) and the growing “cultural conflict” between liberals and conservatives (see Harris 1987; Hunter 1991; Porter 1989). Various authors, such as Jenkins (1994), de Young (2004) and Bromley (1991) attributed the key role in the construction and distribution of the ritual abuse pattern to American fundamentalist moral crusade strategy: the 1970s and early 1980s were marked by the rise of “Moral Majority” movement, which was considered as the significant interest groups in defining and promoting the anti-Satanist myth in USA (Jenkins 1998: 173), and also as demonstrated by Jenkins (1992) and La Fontaine (1998), anti-Satanist campaign developed in the US was further “exported” through different channels of professional and cultural exchanges to the UK and (though to a lesser extent) to other English-speaking countries (Ellis 2000; Hill & Barnett 1993).

An important body of literature explored the theme of childhood in the SRA social control practices (Best 1990; 1991; Jenkins 1992; 1998). Jenkins (1992) argued that starting in the 1960s, with a changing emphasis in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the essential source of social panics in Anglo-Saxon world concerned the problem of child abuse; ritual abuse was one of the themes located in this chain of events (see also Critcher 2003; Jenks 1996).

Finally, publications comparing SRA to the Early Modern Europe witch-hunt have been produced; one of the most outstanding of which is by La Fontaine (1998) who, comparing historical similarities between these phenomena (see also Frankfurter 1994; Cohn 1975; Philips-Stevens 1991; Muchembled 1990) occurring during periods of social unrest, observed that the production of anti-Satanist imagery was occurring in the intersubjective space between the anti-Satanist expert (e.g. therapist, anti-cult activist, social worker informed by anti-Satanist ideology) and the ritual abuse survivor. The “victim” was precisely identified as a ritual abuse survivor by a myriad of biased procedures, e.g. leading questions and peer pressure (Nathan & Snedeker 1995: 141–3; De Young 2004: 67–75), in the case of early modern witch craze “devil worshipper” was often produced by means of physical coercion: the torture measures acted as a tool of imposing Sabbath myth on the arbitrarily selected victims (Cohn 1970; 1975; Ginzburg 1983; 1992). The research of clinical psychologists Ceci and Bruck (1993; 1995) examining the issue of techniques used while interviewing ritually abused children leaves no doubt: the children spoke of Satanic abuse as the result of commonly used techniques of leading questions by anti-Satanist experts, who were ready to confirm the pre-existing SRA ideology.

We must not forget about the similar phenomenon of individuals who self-identified themselves as ritual abuse survivors when an element of external coercion was lacking. This phenomenon was much more widespread during SRA; nevertheless historians also acknowledged cases of women who self-designated themselves as witches during the early modern witch hunts (see Sebald 1990; Cohn 1975).

## **Differences between SRA and the witch craze**

Although exploring SRA reveals considerable similarities with the historical practices of witch hunting in early modern Europe, it should not, however, obscure the essential differences in both Sabbath mythical structures and dynamics of oppressive practices of witch hunters that were shaped by historically distinct socio-political systems. Following the Laclauian perspective, we may assert that SRA was conditioned by an open social field in which the subject positions and practices of articulations are not unchangeably fixed and are not ruled by a simple rule of repetition. Hegemonic practice, which should be understood as an articulatory political operation constructing collective identities out of a plurality of various social demands (Laclau 2005: 95) is possible only in the field of the social, where relational identities are not closed in their potential of transformation (Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 134). To properly comprehend this insight, it is important to follow Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 129–30), who remind us that the social can be divided into two types of ordering logic: the logic of difference, which constitutes differences in the social field, and the logic of equivalence, which combines the particular differences into relational structures. This dichotomist logic of social action is modelled upon the structural linguistics' mechanism of combination and substitution, in which the logic of difference extends the syntagmatic field of language, and the number of differences can enter into relational combinations among themselves; the logic of equivalence, in turn, expands the paradigmatic field in which the differences can be replaced, and thereby reduces the number of differences that may constitute the combination of novel relationships (*ibid.*). This model demonstrates why the hegemonic strategy of the emergence of SRA was unfolding in the social field organised according the logic of difference, where the systems of social meaning are relatively often rearticulated through hegemonic efforts (see Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 153), and secondly why the dynamics of SRA substantially varies from the logic of oppressive witch craze of the early modern era. In the latter case, a social field open to new forms of articulation was minimal; therefore, the persecution of witches as a strategy of re-establishing the normative order of feudal society was carried out in a social field of rigidly fixed collective identities, where persecution (excluding a difference from the field structured as the chain of equivalence of static differences) did not require a hegemonic strategy (see Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 138).

Another remark concerns the symbolic substance of SRA and early modern European witch hunts. Both are structured around the basic theme of the traditional Sabbath stereotype: the ritually abused child is a “clone” of witches' victims, murderous orgies of modern Satanists are merely displaced-in-time “sexual fiestas” of witches (La Fontaine 1994, 1998). Of course, this structure does not represent the mere repetition of the stereotype. Repetition of any sign, as Derrida (1988: 53) noted, refers to the combination of identity and difference; therefore, there is no immutable consistency of anti-Satanist utterance, i.e. the myth has been structured by the repetition and re-articulation. Contingent historical implications caused a series of internal displacement of the utterances; hence the anti-witch stereotype function defined as the space of inscriptions of social control practices has gradually changed.



For example, the contemporary anti-Satanist myth removed from its structure themes that were irrelevant for modern people: Satanists do not do fly through the air on brooms, they do not kiss the toad or the tails of goats; moreover, the personal Satan has disappeared from modern scene of the Sabbath myth, who for hundreds of years personally had supervised the slaying of new-borns, burning their corpses and turning them into a poisonous ointment. In the disenchanting imagination of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the high Satanic priest took the place of the devil; the 20<sup>th</sup> century Satanists did not use flying brooms; instead they shoot pornographic movies on their Sabbaths. However, the structural function of the modern Sabbath stereotype maintains historical continuity with its previous variants: the 20<sup>th</sup> century coven members, like the witches of old, practiced cannibalism, transgressed sexual taboos, profaned religious symbols, murdered children, and undermined the moral foundations of human society (La Fontaine 1998: 183–4).

## Conclusion

As previously mentioned, early modern feudal society was ordered according to the logic of equivalence, which comprises a narrowed social space and a fixed structure of subject positions; such a field is considerably different from the late modern society that became the arena of SRA. The Anglo-Saxon societies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century represented the logic of difference expanding the openness of the social field in which the subject positions are complex and susceptible to permanent subversion brought by counter-hegemonic articulations (see Laclau 2000: 57–8). Hence, the anti-Satanist formation of late modernity reconstructed the Sabbath myth through hegemonic operations, and its scope of social influence was limited compared with that of the early modern Europe. The latter represented the universal logic of the imaginary horizon (Laclau 1990: 61), which during the witch craze embraced the whole of feudal society: its legitimacy was unchallenged, and anti-witch discourses were distributed in both the “high” (elite) and “low” (popular) reproductive channels of cultural patterns. The presence of the Sabbath myth may be detected in all genres of literature of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries: treatises of theologians, religious chronicles, scholastic philosophy, codes authored by monarchs and royal officers (e.g. the Carolingian Code of 1532 imposed penalties on witches), Church and papal documents (e.g. *Vox in Rama, Summis Desiderantes* of Innocent VIII). The Sabbath myth was also distributed in popular literature and apologetic works (e.g. *Directorium Inquisitorium* by Nicolas Emeric, *Tractatus de Hereticis et Sortilegis* of Paulus Grillandusa written in 1524, which creatively reconstructed the myth of Sabbath). In 1595, the Lorraine judge Nicolas Remy wrote *Demonolatreiae*, an important piece in this current of texts, which brought graphic details of the Sabbath. In this category of literature, we should also place the notorious *Malleus Maleficarum*, by Dominicans Kramer and Sprenger, first released in 1486, which coined the idiom defining essence of the Sabbath myth operating during the early modern Europe witch craze. Of course, treaties about witchcraft were also produced in the world of Protestant communities, such as *Criminalium Practica Rerum* (1635). The last category of knowledge on sorcery involved the Inquisition textbooks, which were based on the knowledge collected during

the investigations. The imaginative edifice of knowledge on Sabbath had many closely-connected spaces; its multi-layered structure legitimised the existence of various offices, universities' expertise and religious schools' curricula; it formed a necessary foundation for implementing the regulations, which then dispersed into smaller units of social control systems. The early modern Europe knowledge of witchcraft became the principle of enforcement of power in diverse communities. Doubting the possibility of the existences of witches was for a man of the early modern Europe simply ridiculous, and the myth of Sabbath (with a few exceptions; see Henningsen 1980) has not been questioned by Europeans in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, regardless of changing the amplitude of the search for scapegoats in a given pre-modern period.

Exactly the opposite happened in late modern society, in which any identity of subject position can be negated and become the locus of antagonism; thus, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century societies were an arena of many antagonistic clashes of various hegemonic formations, which by definition were unstable because their position were permanently challenged by counter-hegemonic "expert knowledge". In such a complex discursive field, it is impossible to construct a central normative instance that would be able to constantly exert social control upon different fields of competitive knowledge, and that was precisely the situation through which the legitimacy of SRA proponents was successfully challenged in the mid-1990s by counter-hegemonic groups (e.g. skeptics, the police, mass media) with the result that the majority of ritual abusers were acquainted by the beginning of the 2000s and the Sabbath myth of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was largely debunked.

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## **Povzetek**

Namen tega članka je razprava o dinamiki lova na čarovnice, ki se je pojavil ob koncu 20. stoletja v ZDA in Veliki Britaniji. Razprava vključuje analizo zgodovinske ponovljivosti sabatnega mita, ki je sprožil lov na čarovnice v obdobjih družbenega nereda (La Fontaine 1992; 1994; 1998; Philips-Stevens 1991; Heninngsen 1996; Frankfurter 1994; 2006). Ta članek opozarja na dejstvo, da sta dinamika manije preganjanja čarovnic v 16. stoletju in satanistična panika bili pogojeni z različnima urejevalnima principoma družbenopolitične strukture (logika ekvivalence in logika razlike), kar je determiniralo pojav različnega "anti-satanističnega znanja-moči", ki so ga proizvedle institucije, ki so se borile proti okultni grožnji (t. j. katoliška in protestantska duhovščina v Evropi zgodnje moderne in "psihoterapevtska industrija" v Ameriki poznega 20. stoletja) (Trevor-Roper 1990; Victor 1993). Sledeč diagnozi, ki jo je postavil Becker (1963), ki je trdil, da je pojav družbenega problema vedno povezan z njegovimi zagovorniki, ta članek obravnava tudi profil advokatov satanistične obredne zlorabe (SOZ) in raziskuje kako se je problem obredne zlorabe, ki so ga artikulirale posamezne interesne skupine, spremenil v univerzalno ideologijo in kakšen je bil mehanizem za njegovo formacijo in stabilizacijo. Da bi dosegel ta namen avtor sledi post-gramšijevskemu pogledu na hegemonijo (Laclau in Mouffe 1985; Laclau 1996; 2005) in razvije uvide, na katere je začetno opozoril že v raznih drugih svojih delih (Smoczyński 2010). Avtor pokaže, da so bile hegemonске prakse, ki so jih prakticirali posamezni zagovorniki SOZ, preobražene v učinkovite ukrepe družbenega nadzora, ki so v številnih primerih vodili v preganjanje posameznic in posameznikov, ki so bili etiketirani kot "čarovnice" in "satanisti".

**Ključne besede:** sabatni mit, lov na čarovnice, satanistična panika, satanistična obredna zloraba, ideologija, hegemonija

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